



Mechanics of the Courtroom

1. **Dress for success**

Appearance and how officers are groomed is very important. In order to get the judge to believe your story you must look professional and believable. Dress as if you are going on a job interview. Don't convey a message of disrespect. Wear a suit and don't overdo jewelry. Flashiness does not convey a good impression.

2. **Prepare**

Review everything in your file. Memorize as much as you possibly can so you can testify without your file. Make notes of important dates and only use that when you testify. Also, prepare by talking to the County Attorney about what testimony he/she needs from you and be prepared to answer the questions.

3. **Lay the foundation**

Lay out as much as you possibly can about your history of supervision of this offender, and even other similar offenders. "I have found from previous experience..." is always a good way to describe why you did what you did.

4. **Convey the image you want**

Try to convey an image of a caring and fair professional who does NOT have any biases or hidden agendas. You should keep this in mind as far as your body language. Look interested and attentive and not bored with the proceedings, and above all, **be respectful**.

5. **Avoid traps**

The attorneys for the other side will try to show you are biased and unfair. Avoid answers that show prejudice or an inability to treat a probationer/parolee fairly. If the question, "Would you ever believe the word of a probationer over a non-probationer?" The answer is, "certainly, based on the circumstances."

6. **Be credible**

Many cases come down to an officer's word over an offender's. With this in mind, you should not try to sanitize your testimony to the point where the judge won't believe you. If an attorney asks you if you have ever used a derogatory term to describe an offender, answer truthfully.

7. **Maintain composure**

Do NOT get into a verbal sparring match with the other side. Remember, your attorney will get to redeem your seemingly negative answers. You will hurt your case more by arguing than by saying something that *sounds* bad originally, but that you can explain later.

8. **Pay attention to delivery**

Eye contact is important. Deliver your version of events the same way you would in a social context over dinner, as if you are telling a story.

9. **Know your role in the courtroom**

Your role is to be submissive. You are not above the law; and you ARE NOT the lawyer. Leave the legal opinions to the lawyers and the judge.

10. **Listen carefully**

Only answer the question which is asked, not something else. Don't go beyond the question and volunteer something to the other side. **On cross-examination, the best answer is "yes" or "no," or "I don't remember," or "I don't know."**